STUDY PROJECT

WINFIELD SCOTT HANCOCK
A STUDY IN LEADERSHIP

BY

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AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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ABSTRACT

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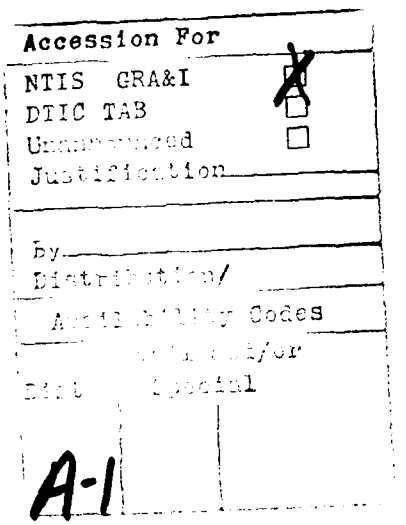
The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the leadership competencies of Major General Winfield Scott Hancock, the most consistently successful corps-level commander of the Civil War. Over the course of his 44 years in uniform, General Hancock participated in the Mexican War, Civil War, and Indian Wars. He was the candidate of the Democratic Party in the 1880 Presidential election. Nicknamed "Hancock the Superb", he was recognized as the best combat commander in the Army of the Potomac. Remaining a general in the Regular Army after the Civil War, Hancock played a major role in post-war affairs. In order to gain insight into Hancock's leadership competencies, DA Pamphlet 600-80 and Field Manual 22-103 will be used as a framework. Research will chronologically follow aspects of Hancock's life and career to identify skills as they are developed and employed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

			Page
ABSTRACT			ii
CHAPTER	I.	INTRODUCTION	1
	II.	THE EARLY YEARS	4
	III.	THE PREPARATORY YEARS	7
	IV.	THE TESTING GROUND	15
	V.	THE SOLDIER-STATESMAN	26
	VI.	CONCLUSION	36
BIBLIOGRAPHY			39



WINFIELD SCOTT HANCOCK
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Nineteenth Century American society was, in large measure, molded by the evolving social and economic interests of the country. These interests would be translated into political and military events that shaped our divisive, yet expansionist nation as it entered the Twentieth Century. Today, over 125 years later, it is a legacy of that period that we continue to grapple with the great political and social issues of a nation once divided by war.

Major General Winfield Scott Hancock was among those preeminent political and military leaders whose participation in these dramatic events resulted in the recasting of American society and its institutions. Born in February 1824 and dying in February 1886, General Hancock spent nearly forty-six years in the uniform of the United States Army.1 From the time he entered the United States Military Academy on 1 July 1840 until his death, General Hancock was on continuous active duty. He learned well the profession of arms in the Mexican War, Seminole War, Civil War, and the Indian Wars. General Hancock was also a major political personality during the Reconstruction Era. An opponent of the radical wing of the Republican Party, he was nominated as

the Democratic Party Presidential candidate for the 1880 election. Hancock would lose by only a few thousand votes among 9,000,000 cast in what was then a questionable electoral process.2

It is the purpose of this study to delve into the life of Winfield Scott Hancock and extract those leadership competencies that placed him among the foremost military men of his time. While he was never to attain a major independent combat command nor be elected to high office, Hancock exhibited many of the outstanding attributes of a great captain. He was a military and political hero. Hancock's character and effectiveness can best be judged in a modern context through the leadership models found in Department of the Army Pamplet 600-80, Executive Leadership, and Field Manual 22-103, Leadership and Command at Senior Levels.

The leadership competencies developed and manifested in Hancock will be addressed as they appear in his life and career. While some traits may be discussed in more than one instance, they will appear as building blocks in Hancock's development. As with other historical examples, Hancock did not possess equally in all areas that degree of competency found in the ideal models. It is, however, from the perspective of the whole that his leadership contributions and place in American military and political history can best be judged.

ENDNOTES

1. Almira Russell Hancock, Reminiscences of Winfield Scott Hancock, pp. 339-340.

2. Ibid., P. 174.

CHAPTER II

THE EARLY YEARS

"The professional demands placed on senior leaders and commanders require that they uphold and abide by the highest standards of ethical behavior. They set the ethical example to achieve moral ascendency over their opponent. If there is one factor that sets senior leaders and commanders apart, it is their ethical visibility."1

The values, ethics, and moral character that Winfield Scott Hancock displayed throughout his life were derived from the examples portrayed by his mother and father. His father, a teacher and lawyer, was also a civic leader, director in the public school system, prominent in church affairs, and an influential member of the Democratic Party. The devout religious character of both parents, coupled with their cultural, educational, and social backgrounds, served to forge in Hancock a lifelong moral and ethical standard that was never to be compromised.2

Intellectually active and ambitious, Hancock was the leader of his group of childhood friends. Whether in sports or academics, he excelled. He sought the companionship of adults and was often found listening with interest to the great political debates of his youth. Viewing through time the significance that Independence Day held for Americans of 150 years ago, it was no small honor when Hancock was selected to recite the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1839. He was

but fifteen years old.3 What can be seen in Hancock are those characteristics of a popular boyhood leader long remembered for excelling in all undertakings, yet possessing the humility and kindness to become a truly respected lifelong friend.

At the age of sixteen, Hancock was admitted to the United States Military Academy at West Point. Four Years later he graduated eighteenth in his class of twenty-five. Hancock did best in drawing, geology, and infantry tactics.4 It has been recorded of Hancock that: "the same qualities and qualifications which had made him popular among his school fellows at home won for him a sustained and similar popularity in the academy."5

While no other member of the Class of 1844 achieved such high renown as Hancock, he did have among his contemporaries future wartime leaders like Grant, McClellan, Reynolds, Longstreet, Pickett, and Jackson.6 It is interesting that Hancock in later years believed that he entered the academy too early. He stated: "I developed late and at sixteen was too much of a boy, too full of life, to feel the importance of hard study. It would have been better if I had not entered until I was eighteen."7 Having spent three years with Hancock at West Point, Major General William F. Smith later wrote: "the strikingly handsome boy, whom I first knew at West Point, was popular for his genial disposition and pleasant manners, though behind these was an inflexible will which kept him always firm in his purpose to do only that which seemed to him good."8 Major General Don Carlos Buell would also reflect of Hancock: "he entered at

sixteen and looked even younger-a fair-haired, handsome boy, well-bred, good-tempered, and manly. He was one of the few "Plebes" who are at once taken into good fellowship by the older class, and he was a special favorite with my most intimate friends."9

There is little question but that in his upbringing at home, and his socialization at West Point, Hancock was fully inculcated with the values and ideals that would serve him throughout adult life. His renown as "Hancock the Superb"10 and the "Thunderbolt of the Army of the Potomac"11 began in these formative years.

ENDNOTES

1. U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 22-103, p. 22.

2. David Xavier Junkin and Frank N. Norton, The Life of Winfield Scott Hancock, pp. 8-9.

3. Francis A. Walker, General Hancock, p. 9.

4. David M. Jordan, Winfield Scott Hancock: A Soldiers Life, p. 9.

5. Junkin and Norton, p. 16.

6. Ibid., p. 16.

7. Ibid., p. 16.

8. Military Service Institution of the United States, Letters and Addresses Contributed at a General Meeting of the Military Service Institution held at Governor's Island, N. Y. H., February 25, 1886, in Memorary of Winfield Scott Hancock, p. 1.

9. Ibid., pp. 17-18.

10. Glenn Tucker, Hancock the Superb, p. 89.

11. Ibid., p. 15.

CHAPTER III

THE PREPARATORY YEARS

Winfield Scott Hancock, at age twenty, was breveted a Second Lieutenant of Infantry, not being commissioned a Regular Army officer until June of 1846. He would spend the first seventeen years of his active career studying and learning his profession.1 While only rising through the rank of captain in the small pre-Civil War Army, the skills which he acquired and the attributes that he demonstrated brought Hancock to the forefront.

Field Manual 22-103, Leadership and Command at Senior Levels, defines skills as:

> "Professional capabilities (that) are most commonly expressed using descriptive attributes...Senior leaders or commanders are bold and innovative; They possess strength of character and courage; They are intelligent, insightful, innovative, and unpredicatible to their enemies; They are tenacious and ambitious and possess the determination to persevere; and finally They have compassion and care for their soldiers."2

The field manual further subdivides professional skills into three categories--conceptual, competency, and communications.3 It can be seen that these attributes were just as important in Hancock's Army of the 1840's as the are for the Army of the 1990's.

The war with Mexico in 1846 found Lieutenant Hancock performing garrison duty in the West at Fort Washita, Indian

Territory. Repeated requests to join his regiment in Mexico were denied. He had already demonstrated a knowledge and attention to detail that made him indispensible to the garrison commander. It was not until General Winfield Scott, Hancock's namesake, learned of his position that Hancock was permitted to proceed to Mexico.4 To Hancock, the Mexican War would be a demonstration of his manliness and courage. He was breveted a First Lieutenant for "gallant and meritorious conduct at Contreras and Churubusco."5 Hancock would experience active combat in three general engagements and a number of skirmishes. He would assume command of his company upon the wounding of his commander and later be slightly wounded himself. Hancock established a reputation as a brave and reliable officer, receiving commendations in the reports of his senior commanders.6

It has been said of Hancock that he instinctively enjoyed the excitement of combat.7 It may have been particularly disappointing when, for the remainder of the Army's occupation in Mexico and subsequent redeployment to New Orleans, Hancock was to serve as Regimental Quartermaster and Commissary. He would continually be assigned to this unglamorous and laborious side of Army life until the Civil War. It is appropriate to note that these duties prepared him well for the role he would ultimately assume. In recognizing that such skills are rare in young line officers, Hancock's superiors clearly identified him as a man of uncommon ability.

In the decade before the Civil War, First Lieutenant, later

Captain Hancock would serve in various assignments as Regimental Adjutant and Quartermaster. These assignments took him from St. Louis and Jefferson Barracks to Fort Meyer and the Seminole War, followed by a tour at Fort Leavenworth during the Kansas Troubles, then to Utah and the Mormon Difficulties, and finally to California.8 A biographer of Hancock described his duties as Aide-de-Camp and Regimental Adjutant at Jefferson Barracks:

> "The duties connected with a service of this nature require chiefly laborious and continuous attention to the business details of military life, and were of rather a routine character...he was unconsciously trained for the higher and broader field of command for which he was destined...he now became educated in that very important branch of military labor--the skillful, accurate, concise, yet full and scholarly preparation of reports of military operations, orders, and all that class of writing which pertains to official records, reports, and correspondence...he grew to be exceptionally qualified in the art of conveying his impressions and his ideas to paper, gaining that degree of accuracy in judgment and expression which stood him in such good stead during emergencies later in life."9

Hancock was finally promoted to First Lieutenant in the Regular Army in January 1853. By virtue of seniority he was again to become eligible for promotion, this time to captain in the expanding army of 1854. Encouraged by President Franklin Pierce, a fellow Mexican War officer, Hancock wrote the President asking for a commission in one of the organizing regiments. He heard nothing of his request, nor was Hancock selected for vacancies in the Adjutant-General or Subsistence departments.10 It is to Hancock's credit that, while severely disappointed in his own nonselection, he had the strength of character and personal loyalty to send congratulatory letters to those officers who were promoted. His magnanimity is doubly impressive in

light of the fact that most of those selected were his juniors.11 Many would question their own selection by the standard of Hancock's outstanding Mexican War record.12

With perserverance, promotion would not long be denied Hancock. He readily accepted promotion to captain in the Quartermaster Department in November 1855. Although it is recorded that Hancock would have preferred the Infantry or Adjutant-General department, he could not afford to decline having been a lieutenant for nearly twelve years.13

The outbreak of the Seminole War in 1856 found Captain Hancock assigned as Assistant Quartermaster to the expedition commanded by General Harney. Stationed at Fort Meyer, Florida, in the center of Indian activity, Hancock was the only officer to have his family accompany him. These were difficult times for both Hancock and his family, but many officers would later recall the unstinting hospitality offered in the Hancock's quarters. When not in the field, a mess facility was unavailable to the officers. Recognizing this, Hancock and his wife would serve three meals a day at their table. The demand was so great that lots were drawn among the officers to determine who would have the privilege of dining.14

Hancock's duties in the Seminole War were vast. Charged with supplying troops actively engaged in the field, he had under his direction about 150 boats varying in size from steamers to canoes.15 Frequent changes in position, the terrain, and climate all necessitated that Hancock maintain constant vigilance. His

judgment, resourcefulness, and creativity ensured the army in the field was well supplied. In the swamps of Florida, without effective communications, his coordinating efforts were instrumental in maintaining an effective fighting force. The contribution Hancock made toward successfully concluding the fifteen month Florida expedition was shown when General Harney, reassigned to quell the Kansas disorders, asked that Hancock follow him to Fort Leavenworth.16

Hancock would spend nine months at Fort Leavenworth, enough time to experience the sectional rivalry over the issue of slavery.17

The year 1858 brought Hancock to the next stage in his professional development. Assigned as Assistant Quartermaster for the Mormon Expedition, Hancock was ordered to proceed to Fort Bridger in Utah where the 6th Infantry was concentrating for the first time since the Mexican War.18 This show of force was enough to subdue the Mormons and the regiment departed almost immediately for Benicia, California. The distance from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Bridger was 1,000 miles. From Fort Bridger to Benicia another 1,119 miles had to be crossed, much of this country being wasteland and the high Sierra Nevada range. This march of 2,119 miles was regarded in its day as the longest ever made by infantry.19

Captain Hancock served as Quartermaster for the expedition from Fort Bridger to Benicia. With a supply train of 128 wagons, five ambulances, and 1,000 mules he is credited with amply

supplying the regiment and having both troops and trains arrive in California in better condition than when they had departed Utah. Additionally, Hancock's journal and comprehensive report to the Quartermaster General provided detailed information on routes, terrain, distances, and the availability of water and grass. So successful was the conduct of the march (largely Hancock's responsibility) that his performance was gratefully acknowledged in Washington.20

California was to be Hancock's last assignment before the Civil War. He commanded a small depot in Los Angeles, supplying outlying garrisons of dragoons and infantry. As the political situation worsened in the East, Hancock and the other officers were forced to search within their consciences on which course to follow. After the outbreak of hostilities, Captain Hancock made a Fourth of July speech that served to quiet rumors and block dissident elements within California. A phrase from this address would guide Hancock throughout the Civil War. He said: "Union is a precious heritage that we intend to preserve and defend to the last extremity."21

The seventeen years that Hancock spent on active service before the Civil War were a period for preparation, acquiring and honing knowledge and skills, and leadership development. It has been written of the Hancock of this period that there was no other officer in the army who: "learned so much that was to become of use when the great occasion came."22 He was bold, industrious, ambitious, and loyal. He held: "repugnance at all

that was slovenly, clumsy, course, or half made up."23 The writer, a member of Hancock's Civil War staff, further stated:

"I am disposed to believe that this period of Hancock's life was passed to even better advantage than if it had comprised active operations on the large scale against a powerful enemy...To a man who is trying to do everything in the best possible way, who is studying his profession and accumulating experience against the day of larger things, nothing is more instructive, enlarging, and strengthening (than administrative duties), if not pursued too long...(during the war) he could conduct a long march over bad roads, with artillery and trains, better, in my humble judgment, than any other officer of the war, Federal or Confederate.24

While it would be as a fighting commander that Hancock would rise to fame, the care which he exercised in supplying and administering successive battlefield commands would be recognized as the most thorough in the army. Only Hancock, among all senior commanders, had such comprehensive knowledge of his profession.

ENDNOTES

1. Almira Russell Hancock, Reminiscences Of Winfield Scott Hancock, p. 339.

2. U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 22-103, p. 27.

3. Ibid., p. 39.

4. David Xavier Junkin and Frank N. Norton, The Life of Winfield Scott Hancock, pp. 18-19.

5. Francis A. Walker, General Hancock, p. 20.

6. Junkin and Norton, p. 33.

7. Glenn Tucker, Hancock the Superb, p. 43.

8. David M. Jordan, Winfield Scott Hancock: A Soldiers Life, pp. 20-27.

9. Junkin and Norton, p. 34.

10. Jordan, p. 23.

11. Hancock, pp. 7-8.

12. Jordan, p. 23.

13. Hancock, p. 25.

14. Ibid., pp. 28-29.

15. Junkin and Norton, p. 35.

16. Jordan, p. 25.

17. Ibid., p. 25.

18. Tucker, p. 53.

19. Ibid., p. 54.

20. Jordan, p. 26.

21. Junkin and Norton, p. 46.

22. Walker, p. 29.

23. Ibid., p. 29.

24. Ibid., pp. 29-30.

CHAPTER IV

THE TESTING GROUND

"Leadership and command at senior levels is the art of direct and indirect influence and the skill of creating the conditions for sustained organizational success to achieve the desired result."1

"Good organizations are adaptive, cohesive, and resilient."2

"Senior professionals blend the best of command, control, leadership, and management into a personal strategy for organizational success."3

"Man for man one division is just as good as another--they vary only in the skill and leadership of their commanders."4

"Moral force, added to unit and soldier capabilities, provides the strongest form of organizational action."5

In the summer of 1861, thirty-seven year old Winfield Scott Hancock returned to Washington from the West. He had been informed before departing California of his assignment as Quartermaster on the staff of General Anderson. He preferred, however, to serve as a volunteer officer in the Infantry. Through the intercession of George McClellan, Hancock was appointed a brigade commander in the Army of the Potomac with the rank of Brigadier General, United States Volunteers.6

The winter of 1861-1862 was one for organizing the mobilizing armies for a conflict that all now realized would not soon be over. The battles of the Peninsula, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, the Wilderness, Cold Harbor, and Petersburg all lay ahead. During this winter a characteristic of Hancock emerged that would cement his

relationship with the volunteer army. This was an unbroken bond of mutual trust, confidence, and loyalty.

General Hancock's division commander, General Smith, would write of this time:

> "The winter was given up by General Hancock to indefatigable labors of drilling and disciplining his brigade, which through the war bore the impress of his teaching. The treatment of his volunteer officers was at first a surprise and mystery to them. On duty he never overlooked a fault, and his reproofs were prompt and sharp. Off duty his bearing was courteous and unconstrained. When his subordinates learned to understand the two natures thus shown, they respected and loved him, and imitated his example. It was a good school for the citizen volunteer."7

Hancock's first battle, where he would exercise direct leadership over a large force, was on 5 May 1862 during the Peninsula Campaign. Ordered to make a demonstration on the left flank of the enemy, Hancock was promised support to accomplish this mission. Finding rather that he could occupy the enemy position and therefore take Williamsburg, Hancock sent a dispatch requesting reinforcement along with his stated intention of assaulting the enemy works. Neither the support requested nor permission to attack were given. Instead, Hancock was ordered to return to his first position. Declining to leave a position of such promise, Hancock delayed his retrograde movement while continuing to dispatch information describing the situation and opportunities it afforded. Meanwhile, Confederate forces under Longstreet, D. H. Hill, and Early, recognizing their exposure on the left flank, began to mass for an attack against Hancock. During the ensuing action Hancock feigned withdrawal and placed

his regiments behind the crest of a hill. Here his brigade, at thirty yards, fired two volleys into the stronger attacking force and then immediately changed over to the offensive, charging with the bayonet.8

This fight became Hancock's demonstration to the rest of the Army that well-led, well-trained, and aggressive Union soldiers could defeat the Southerner. It was after Williamsburg that McClellan would wire: "Hancock was superb today."9 A soldier of the 6th Maine wrote: "certainly after Williamsburg, if not before, the brigade believed that whatever General Hancock ordered was exactly right."10 General Baldy Smith, Hancock's division commander wrote in his report of the action:

> "The brilliancy of the plan of battle, the coolness of its execution, the seizing of the proper instant for changing from the defensive to the offensive, the steadiness of the troops engaged, and the completeness of the victory, are subjects to which I earnestly call the attention of the commander in chief for his just praise."11

The Peninsula Campaign would end after the Seven Days' battles. Hancock did not play a major role in this concluding phase, but was numbered among the very few officers whose reputations were enhanced by their conduct on the Peninsula .

The reputation for resolute leadership that Hancock carried later afforded the opportunity for his elevation to division command during the Battle of Antietam on 17 September 1862. Hancock's brigade took no active part in the battle, but when the Second Corps' First Division commander was mortally wounded Hancock would be called upon by McClellan to assume command. Hancock's name and the renown of the Second Corps would forever

be linked in the history of the Civil War.12 It was said of Hancock's assumption of command: "no appointment could have won wider acclaim in the army, where the admiration of Hancock had become almost universal."13 General Francis A. Walker, a member of Hancock's wartime staff, would write of this day:

> "An hour after he rode down the line, at Antietam, to take up the sword that had fallen from Richardson's dying hand, no one could have told--he himself hardly knew--that he had not commanded a division for years. So thorough had he prepared himself for promotion during his service with his brigade, so sure was he of his powers, that he stepped forward to the higher command upon the field of battle, amid its wreck and disaster, without a moment of hesitation or of doubt, and at once became the leader of the division, as fully and perfectly as Sumner in his time had been, as Richardson but just now had been. The staff knew it; the troops felt it. Every officer in his place, and every man in the ranks was aware, before the sun went down, that he belonged to Hancock's division."14

After the Battle of Antietam, Hancock was promoted to Major General of Volunteers while McClellan was relieved. McClellan's departure from command of the Army of the Potomac was widely criticized throughout the Army. Hancock, in particular, owed much to McClellan for his rapid rise. He was McClellan's loyal friend, but it was within his character when Hancock wrote: "we are serving no one man: we are serving our country."15

Burnside's appointment to command the Army of the Potomac and the subsequent battle at Fredericksburg on 13 December 1862 were disastrous for the Union cause. Battle management in almost all aspects was deplorable. The odds against carrying the Confederate position along Marye's Heights were practically insurmountable. Yet, when ordered to attack, Hancock and his division moved forward. They repeatedly assaulted the objective,

only to be stopped short in the final attempt. Hancock's division advanced farther upon the enemy and sustained more casualties than any other division engaged.16 Of 5,000 soldiers assigned, Hancock would lose 2,000.17 Why did Hancock's division perform so well against such odds? General Smith provides the key:

> "Of his peculiar qualities on the field of battle, I can say that his personal bearing and appearance gave confidence and enthusiasm to his men, and perhaps no soldier during the war contributed so much of personal effect in action as did General Hancock...in the friendly circle his eye was warm and genial, but in the hour of battle became intensely cold and had immense power on those around him."18

Chancellorsville, 1-3 May 1863, would next provide Hancock the stage upon which to demonstrate his outstanding leadership, and again he would do so. Engaged throughout this badly handled battle, Hancock is best remembered for his rearguard action against McLaws, Anderson, and Stuart. As the main body of the Army of the Potomac withdrew, Hancock positioned his force on ground previously occupied by seven divisions.19 His knowledge of the terrain, tactical skill in deploying his force, clear understanding of his mission, and personal example enabled Hancock's greatly outnumbered division to hold while the rest of the army conducted the retrograde movement. The successful disengagement of his own division, while in continuous contact with the Confederates, further proved Hancock's prowess. Notably, Hancock's personal courage had a steadying, confidence building effect on his soldiers. A subordinate officer would comment:

"It is interesting to see General Hancock ride along amidst this rain of shells utterly indifferent, not even ducking his head when one came close to him, which is a difficult thing to do, for one seems to do it involuntarily. General Hancock is in his element and at his best in the midst of a fight."20

Following the Battle of Chancellorsville, political intrigue surrounded the position of commander for the Army of the Potomac. Darius Couch, Hancock's Corps Commander, would become so disillusioned by events that he requested relief and reassignment. Hancock, by now unquestionably the best senior officer in the East, was selected to assume command of the corps on 9 June 1863. It would be as the commander of the Second Corps that Hancock gained his greatest fame. His conduct at the Battle of Gettysburg, 1-3 July 1863, was in its time unequalled. Today it serves as a study in leadership and command.

Since it is not the intent of this study to recount the battle, it is sufficient to state that upon learning of Buford and Reynold's engagement of Lee's invading Army of Northern Virginia at Gettysburg, General Meade, then commanding the Army of the Potomac, would send Hancock to Gettysburg with full powers to take command over two more senior corps commanders, assess whether to accept battle at Gettysburg, and if so, to deploy and fight with forces available until Meade could arrive with the remainder of the army. Hancock's appearance on the battlefield was electrifying. He halted the disintegrating Union forces, placed them in defensive positions, and advised General Meade to fight Lee at Gettysburg.21 The effect which Hancock had upon the Union forces, none of which were from his own Second Corps, is recounted:

"I rode up to him and, saluting, reported with the battery with which I was serving. Turning quickly to his right and rear, and pointing to the knoll on the northwestern slope of Culp's Hill, he said: "Do you see that hill, young man? Put your battery there and stay there." I shall never forget the inspiration of his commanding, controlling presence or the fresh courage he imparted, his whole atmosphere strong and invigorating."

Hancock's preeminent role at Gettysburg continued throughout the succeeding days of the battle. By his superior battle management, Hancock held the left and saved the army at the Peach Orchard and Devils Den on the second day. The third day, 3 July 1863, found him repulsing Pickett in the center. Severely wounded at the head of his Second Corps during Pickett's Charge, Hancock would not relinquish command until he knew the battle had been won. General Abner Doubleday wrote:

"He was wounded while personally superintending a flank attack upon the enemy. The repulse of this great charge was, perhaps, the crowning achievement of his life. As he lay helpless in his ambulance he wrote to urge a vigorous pursuit of the beaten army, not forgetting in the midst of his own pain, suffering, and probable death, the great interests confided to his care."23

Gettysburg was a most lethal battlefield. While throughout the fighting Hancock would exercise command over other corps in addition to his own Second, that corps' casualty rate is instructive. Of the less than 10,000 men of the Second Corps engaged, 4,350 were killed, wounded, or missing. Among that number were 349 officers.24 Under these most strenuous circumstances, Hancock's performance throughout the three-day battle was clearly unsurpassed.

The fall and winter of 1863-1864 were a period for recuperation from his wound at Gettysburg. Although Hancock was

not to fully recover until the war ended, he resumed command of his corps in time to lead it in Grant's opening campaign for 1864. The Wilderness, Salient, Spottyslvania, North Anna, Cold Harbor, and siege of Petersburg would bring further distinction upon Hancock. His corps, by now the largest in the Army, marched and fought continuously from 4 May to 15 June 1864. Always in the van, Hancock was repeatedly called upon to undertake the most difficult missions. The confidence that Grant and Meade had in Hancock and his Second Corps was best recorded by Major General John Hartranft:

> "As a lieutenant he was unsurpassed. His loyalty was absolute. I do not mean loyalty to the Cause only, but loyalty, as a soldier, to his chief. Whatever opinions of his own he may have had, and undoubtedly he had some very decided ones, his interpretation and obedience to orders were altogether unbiass and impersonal. To comprehend and carry out the plans of his chief, to subordinate himself to duty, had become a second nature to him. His quick, alert, mind and extensive professional knowledge and experience enabled him to execute his part of the extended and complicated operations with a perfect understanding of its relative importance."25

It was during the siege of Petersburg that Grant wrote President Lincoln recommending Hancock be given command of the Army of the Potomac while Meade assumed a separate command in the middle states. Meade supported this move, but ultimately a change was not made.26 In August of 1864, Hancock was appointed a Brigadier General in the Regular Army, having only in November of the previous year been promoted a Major and Quartermaster. With this appointment as a general officer in the Regular Army, Hancock was never to serve as a field grade officer.27

The strenuous nature of the 1864 campaign finally took its

toll on Hancock. His wound from Gettysburg had not healed and it incapacitated him from further command. By order of Secretary Stanton, Hancock spent the winter of 1864-1865 convalescing and recruiting. It was hoped that with his immense popularity, Hancock could recruit a corps of veterans to take the field in 1865 for the final campaign against Lee. Although the most respected leader in the East, Hancock was unable to meet the goal of recruiting 20,000 men because of the disparity between state and Federal enlistment bounties.28

Hancock's final command of the Civil War was the Department of West Virginia and the Middle Military Division. This command, comprising approximately 100,000 soldiers, Hancock would assume on 27 February 1865.29 It was in Grant's plan to have Hancock, with that portion of his forces not assigned garrison or security duty, proceed south down the Shenandoah to cut off Lee's last line of retreat. Events, however, were to move too quickly for Hancock to play any further role.

It is appropriate here to reflect on Hancock's service during the Civil War:

"At its start Hancock had told a friend that he expected to come out of the war a brevet major; at its end he was a brevet major general, a regular brigadier general, and one of the most respected soldiers in the United States."30

Hancock's contemporaries wrote of his greatness as a leader:

"He could press the fight as hard and close and make it as enthusiastic with his own men, and so hot for the enemy, as any general in the war...his precautions and preparations were so thorough that his success was almost inevitable...personal pressure and bold supervision at every critical point of the field."31

"No commander ever doubted for a single instant the absolute loyalty of Hancock, and no soldier ever received from him a command that he was not eager and proud to obey."32

"The qualities which made General Hancock great, his love of truth, his splendid bravery, his integrity and patriotism, these have outlived all fashions of men and defied every age of corruption. In any of the ages General Hancock would have been great. Moses would have made him a leader among the warriors of Israel, and inspired pens would have recorded his deeds."33

ENDNOTES

1. U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 22-103, p. 3.

2. Ibid., p. 50.

3. Ibid., p. 43.

4. Ibid., p. 26.

5. Ibid., p. 78.

6. Almira Russell Hancock, Reminiscences of Winfield Scott Hancock, pp. 77-78.

7. Military Service Institution of the United States, Letters and Addresses Contributed at a General Meeting of the Military Service Institution held at Governor's Island, N. Y. H., February 25, 1886, in Memory of Winfield Scott Hancock, p. 1.

8. David M. Jordan, Winfield Scott Hancock: A Soldiers Life, pp. 43-44.

9. Glenn Tucker, Hancock the Superb, p. 89.

10. Military Service Institution, p. 45.

11. Francis A. Walker, General Hancock, p. 43.

12. Tucker, p. 92.

13. Ibid., p. 93.

14. Walker, p. 48.

15. Jordan, p. 56.

16. Tucker, pp. 107-113.

17. Allan Nevins, A Diary of Battle: The Personal Journals of Colonel Charles S. Wainwright 1861-1865, p. 142.

18. Military Service Institution, p. 3.

19. Jordan, p. 74.

20. Ibid., p. 74.

21. Walker, pp. 105-118.

22. Ibid., p. 112.

23. Military Service Institution, p. 21.

24. Walker, p. 145.

25. Military Service Institution, pp. 38-39.

26. Tucker, p. 243.

27. Hancock, p. 339.

28. Jordan, p. 174.

29. Ibid., p. 174.

30. Ibid., p. 175.

31. Military Service Institution, p. 23.

32. Ibid., p. 69.

33. Ibid., p. 12.

CHAPTER V

THE SOLDIER-STATESMAN

Leaders at all levels have unique, critical tasks that cannot be performed by subordinates, most commonly because they are so complex that lower echelon leaders lack the frame of reference to make the required decisions. Tasks that cannot be delegated are critical and the leader who does them makes a unique contribution. At the executive level, leaders use their frames of reference to understand complex and uncertain situations that their subordinate leaders lack the knowledge, experience or perspective to understand."1

To many, Winfield Scott Hancock's greatest contributions to his country were performed during the last twenty years of his life. With some exceptions, he would spend the remainder of his career at the executive leadership level, at positions that would today be comparable to a specified command. Passage to this level is first illustrated by Hancock in negotiations for the surrender of Colonel John S. Mosby's forces at the close of the war. Mosby's negotiator, Dr. Montiero would later recollect:

"I have never met a man for whom I have a higher regard, or more profound respect than I have, even at this date, for General Hancock...this noble old hero was so kind, considerate and gentle in his manner to us, when we had so little to expect of him, that he conquered me more effectively by his manly sympathy and noble sentiments than could have been done by brute force and military despotism."2

The most distasteful military duty Hancock was to perform, the execution of the sentence of death by hanging of Mrs. Mary Surratt, fell to him on 7 July 1865.3 As commander of the Middle Military Division, encompassing Washington, D. C., Hancock was

charged by Secretary Stanton with moving his headquarters from Winchester and restoring order in the capitol following President Lincoln's assassination. While the military court that tried the conspirators was not under Hancock's jurisdiction, he would be responsible for the military prison that ultimately was charged with carrying out the verdict of the court. It is instructive to note that Hancock supported Mrs. Surratt's daughter in her plea to President Johnson for a writ of habeas corpus. Hancock's wife would later write: "not once, but many times did my husband urge upon the President unanswerable reasons for granting a pardon. He would reply that he could not. The execution was demanded by prominent men of his party; and a portion of his cabinet were as uncompromising as the others."4 This would not be the last time that Hancock would forcefully express his belief that civil law should once again have precedence over military authority. This belief, founded on the influence of his father, together with readings of Chitty's Blackstone, Kent's Commentaries, and other legal works, had a far reaching impact on his future career.5

In 1866, General Hancock received his last promotion in the Regular Army. In that year, Grant was promoted to the recently created rank of general and Sherman to lieutenant general, filling the position vacated by Grant. To occupy the position of major general once held by Sherman, Grant recommended Hancock.6 Hancock's appointment was approved by the President and confirmed by the Senate with an effective promotion date of 26 July 1866.7

With this promotion, Hancock was assigned to command the Department of Missouri with headquarters at Fort Leavenworth. In this command, Hancock had both civil and military responsibilities, but was principally tasked with controlling the Plains Indians. By March of 1867, Sherman ordered Hancock to mount an expedition and notify the Indians that: "there was to be war or peace; and, if they preferred the latter, they must cease from their outrages upon travelers and their depredations against the white settlers."8 Hancock would meet with the major tribes, but their dissimulation and stealing away in the night convinced him that this meant war. Hancock ordered Custer to bring the Indians back to the negotiations. Custer's ensuing pursuit was unsuccessful. The Indians, murdering whites enroute, escaped across the Smoky Hills River. Based upon Custer's official report, Hancock later directed the destruction of the abandoned Indian village. This precipitated a war with the Plains Indians that would last until the winter of 1868-1869. Hancock would not lead the army to final victory, instead, in September 1867 he was relieved by General Sheridan and ordered to proceed on the most politically sensitive and controversial assignment of his career.9

In March of 1867, while Hancock was engaged in negotiations with the Plains Indians, Congress passed the Reconstruction Act, "an Act to provide for the more efficient Government of the Rebel States."10 Selected to command the Fifth Military District of Louisiana and Texas, Hancock was called to Washington for

consultations before departing for his headquarters in New Orleans. These consultations concerned enforcement of the Reconstruction Acts whose basic thrust was the continuance of military authority over civil law in the South. While in Washington, Hancock would say to his wife:

"I am expected to exercise extreme military authority over those people. I shall disappoint them. I have not been educated to overthrow the civilian authorities in time of peace. I intend to recognize the fact that the Civil War is at an end, and shall issue my order or proclamation accordingly. I tell you this because I may lose my commission, and I shall do so willingly, rather than retain it at the sacrifice of a life-long principle."11

Enroute to New Orleans, Hancock prepared the order that he intended to publish upon his arrival. This order, General Order No. 40, was issued on 29 November 1867.12 It would forever be linked to the reputation and fame of Hancock among those citizens of the country who opposed an autocratic Congress. This order, restoring civilian rule is quoted:

"I. In accordance with General Order No. 81, Headquarters of the Army, Adjutant General's Office, Washington, D. C., August 27, 1867, Major-General W. S. Hancock hereby assumes command of the Fifth Military District and of the Department composed of the States of Louisiana and Texas.

II. The general commanding is gratified to learn that peace and quiet reign in this department. It will be his purpose to preserve this condition of things. As a means to this great end he requires the maintenance of the civil authorities and the faithful execution of the laws as the most efficient under existing circumstances.

In war it is indispensable to repel force by force, to overthrow and destroy opposition to lawful authority; but when insurrectionary force has been overthrown and peace established, and the civil authorities are ready and willing to perform their duties, the military power should cease to lead and the civil administration resume its natural and rightful dominion. Solemnly impressed with these views, the general announces that the great principles of American liberty are still the inheritance of this people, and ever should be. The right of trial by jury, the habeas corpus, the liberty of the press, the

freedom of speech, the natural rights of persons, and the rights of property must be preserved.

Free institutions, while they are essential to the prosperity and happiness of the people, always furnish the strongest inducements to peace and order. Crimes and offenses committed in this district must be left to the consideration and judgment of the regular civil tribunals, and those tribunals will be supported in their lawful jurisdiction.

Should there be violations of existing laws which are not inquired into by the civil magistrates, or should failures in the administration of justice be complained of, the cases will be reported to these headquarters, where such orders may be made as may be deemed necessary.

While the general thus indicates his purpose to respect the liberties of the people, he wishes all to understand that armed insurrection or forcible resistence to the law will be instantly suppressed by arms."13

Order No. 40 was as electrifying to Southerners and Northern Democrats as was Hancock's appearance on the battlefield of Gettysburg to the disorganized and retreating Federal army. Hancock had thrown down the gauntlet against the Radical Republicans and arbitrary rule over the defeated South. Unfortunately, it would be picked up by General Grant, his longtime superior and now political rival. So bitterly opposed on the one hand and so widely acclaimed on the other did Hancock become that his continuance in command of the Fifth Military District was untenable. After less than four months he would be relieved at his own request. In requesting this relief, Hancock would cite the countermanding of his orders by Grant, the constant opposition of the military governors in his district, and political intrigue from Washington. What had once been a warm and friendly relationship between Grant and Hancock, now became one of acrimony and meanness.14

Of Hancock and his conduct at this time it was written:

"Notwithstanding all his fame as a soldier, I think history will accord not the least bright page to his administration in Louisiana and Texas. At a time when military men thirsted for power, when one part of the country was demoralized by poverty and defeat, and when even the people of the North were getting accustomed to the despotism of long-continued military authority, General Hancock clearly proclaimed the fundamental principle of the subordination of the military power, which is always abnormal, to the civil, which alone has the true interests of mankind in its keeping."15

Following his relief, Hancock's next assignment was with the Department of the Atlantic under General Meade.16 Meanwhile, Grant had been nominated as the Republican Party candidate for President. Hancock would not support Grant and, in fact, was himself to receive 144 votes on the twenty-eighth ballot at the Democratic National Convention. Hancock had not campaigned for the Presidential nomination and would not do so in succeeding conventions before his ultimate nomination in 1880. He was, however, an ardent supporter of the Democratic ticket. His rift with Grant would deepen. Grant's ultimate election in the 1868 race provided an excellent opportunity for him to further slight Hancock. This opportunity came when George Thomas, commanding the Western Division of the Army, died.17 Instead of assigning Hancock to this position, Grant placed him in the Department of Dakota. It was a backwater assignment not suited for a senior Regular Army major general.18

Hancock would remain in command of the Department of Dakota from the spring of 1869 until November 1872. Among the issues with which he was to contend or play a prominent role were protecting the Northern Pacific Railroad, encroachment by miners into the Black Hills, and establishment of Yellowstone as the

first national park.19

George Meade died in November 1872 while commanding the Division of the Atlantic. Hancock, by now the most senior major general in the Army, was in line for the command. Grant consented to the assignment with the strong urging of Sherman and Sheridan. Like Meade, Hancock too would command the Division of the Atlantic until his death.20 Of Hancock's post-Civil War service, Major General John M. Schofield would write:

"The acquaintance formed in 1865 soon ripened into strong friendship and ever-increasing admiration of the splendid qualities which made Hancock, in my estimation, one of the very foremost men of our time. His military record places him in the highest rank among soldiers as the actual commander of troops upon the field of battle. While his discharge of administrative duties was always marked with ability, accurate knowledge, and with profound respect for law and the civil and military rights of individuals."21

General Sherman, long the go-between of Grant and Hancock spoke praisingly of Hancock's loyalty, even under the most trying circumstances:

"No matter what his opinions, and they were always strong, he was knightly loyal to his superiors...so long as I live I will be only too happy to bear testimony to his generous and magnificient qualities as a soldier, gentleman, and patriot."22

In the remaining years of his life Hancock experienced the loss of both of his children and his favorite wartime aide who had remained with him in all post-war assignments. He rose to further military and political acclaim. Hancock was narrowly defeated in the 1880 Presidential election, an election he could have won had it not been for defection within the Democratic Party. This defection took the form of election fraud in New York and the lukewarm support of Samuel Tilden, once the

Democratic Party standard bearer. Hancock was also not promoted to lieutenant general because Sheridan was passed over for promotion to replace Sherman. These personal and professional setbacks Hancock took in stride. Interestingly, Hancock had not campaigned for high political office or military position, at least not by today's standards. He was not present at the convention that nominated him. He always placed military duty before political aspiration. In defeat he was magnanimous, attending the inauguration of his rival, James A. Garfield.23

Thomas F. Bayard, a late Nineteenth Century Secretary of State wrote of Hancock:

"In an age of mercenary forces and luxurious tendencies, he was wholly disdainful of the attractions of wealth or the arts that gain or keep it. High above the seductions of gainful pursuits he held aloft the standard of his profession nor never suffered it to be lowered in the public eye."24

Of Hancock's character, professionalism, and integrity it was further said:

"In all that distinguished array of men on both sides of the great Civil War, none more than Hancock impersonated the best elements of manhood; none more than he embodied the traits of soldier and Citizen, and none better illustrated the tender traits of our humanity that endear the relations of husband, father, and friend."25

"The (Presidential) campaign had for him one brilliant result, for the efforts of his political opponents established his character and actions so high and unimpeachable as thenceforth to leave them unquestioned."26

Ironically, Hancock's last major duty was to plan and lead the national observance for the burial of the man who had done so much to obstruct and belittle him. Hancock accomplished the burial of Ulysses S. Grant with the impressive dignity which the

occasion demanded. In stating that the funeral, "should be as imposing as the Government desires and as public sentiments demands," Hancock was true to form.27 Duty always came first to him.

ENDNOTES

1. U.S. Department of the Army, Pamphlet 600-80, p. 7.

2. Glenn Tucker, Hancock the Superb, pp. 267-_68.

3. David M. Jordan, Winfield Scott Hancock: A Soldiers Life, p. 178.

4. Almira Russell Hancock, Reminiscences of Winfield Scott Hancock, p. 109.

5. David Xavier Junkin and Frank N. Norton, The Life of Winfie Scott Hancock, p. 17.

6. Tucker, pp. 273-274.

7. Hancock, p. 339.

8. Junkin and Norton, p. 280.

9. Ibid., pp. 281-282.

10. Ibid., p. 284.

11. Hancock, pp. 120-122.

12. Tucker, p. 279.

13. Francis A. Walker, General Hancock, pp. 297-298.

14. Ibid., pp. 303-304.

15. Military Service Institution of the United States, Letters and Addresses Contributed at a General Meeting of the Military Service Institution held at Governor's Island, N. Y. H., February 25, 1886, in Memorary of Winfield Scott Hancock, p. 4.

16. Tucker, p. 287.

17. Ibid., p. 289.

18. Jordan, p. 229.

19. Ibid., pp. 234-235.

20. Walker, p. 304.

21. Military Service Institution, p. 11.

22. Ibid., p. 10.

23. Walker, p. 311.

24. Military Service Institution, pp. 7-8.

25. Ibid., p. 17.

26. Ibid., p. 4.

27. Jordan, p. 312.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In assessing those competencies that made General Hancock a great soldier, it is appropriate to begin with leadership. He was unequaled as a teacher and coach in developing subordinates and molding his successive commands into efficient combat organizations. Subordinates such as Barlow, Birney, Brooke, and Miles understood Hancock's vision and were able to execute their tasks with full knowledge of the intended result. From the moment Hancock first assumed command of a brigade of volunteers until he relinquished command of the Second Corps, he set the standard. He instilled in subordinates the confidence to engage the Confederate army and win. Hancock was a compassionate officer, caring for the welfare of his soldiers. He paid strict attention to the small, yet critical details of supplying and administering his forces in the field. As a leader, Hancock exemplified the ideals of service and duty. He indeed was, "farsighted, flexible, and responsive."1

Hancock's understanding of the intent of his superiors was translated into his vision for battlefield success. Gettysburg fully demonstrated his unique ability to serve as the standard bearer for the Army of the Potomac providing the purpose, direction, and motivation necessary to capture the moral

ascendancy over Lee's army.2 He would do no less as Commander of the Fifth Military District in publishing General Order No. 40.

As a role model exhibiting the moral and ethical behavior of the senior commander and leader, Hancock served to exemplify the highest standards of conduct. In a period in our history when such was expected in a man, Hancock would be first among many whose moral and ethical principles would guide his actions, regardless of personal consequences. In placing principles before personal advancement, Hancock would feel the full wrath of Grant and a radical Congress. Yet Hancock would continue with that which he saw as his duty and not demean himself in response to the provocations of Grant. Regardless of his personal feelings, he never showed disloyalty to his superiors.

The professional skills which Hancock displayed are a study of themselves. He was creative and intuitive. He made sound decisions based upon personal knowledge and understanding of the situation. Hancock led by example, enduring the hardship of combat and campaigning along with his soldiers. He was brave. Hancock's courage under fire served to strengthen the resolve of all men under his command. He was concise in communicating his orders. His manner of treating volunteer officers and soldiers was repaid with battlefield success.3 Hancock was critical, yet persuasive. He was demanding, but not threatening. He recognized his limitations and relied upon others whose abilities he respected. General Hancock was a team builder and player. Most importantly, he excelled in the art of soldiering and was

the consummate practitioner of the profession of arms.

Hancock dominated the battlefields on which he fought. The process of managing, leading, and controlling his forces by personal influence and example resulted in Hancock's repeated victories. Success breeds success. Success leads to the internalization of effective organizational processes that attain mission objectives. The pride that soldiers held in being a part of Hancock's command clearly indicated the healthy climate of respect and confidence between the leader and the led. Hancock was meticulous in recognizing the achievements of others. To the officers and men of the Second Corps, his outstanding attributes embodied their highest ideals of a great soldier.

Few great combat commanders are able to successfully transition to that level of responsibility we today call executive leadership. General Hancock made this transition. His ability to understand the critical issues of his time and play a dominate role in the formulation of policy placed him at the forefront of events that shaped the post-war period. General Winfield Scott Hancock rose to greatness upon the qualities of character, leadership, and professional knowledge. His accomplishments have provided a study in leadership and command at senior levels.

ENDNOTES

1. U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 22-103, p. 4.
2. Ibid., pp. 45-47.
3. Bruce Catton, A Stillness at Appomattox, p. 57.

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